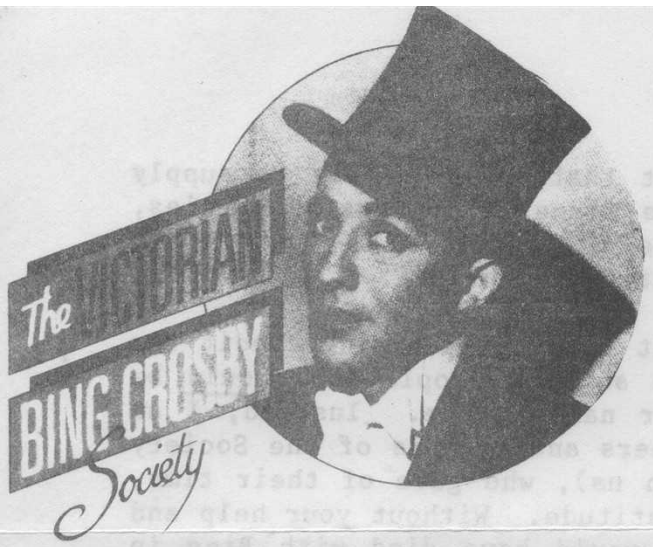


NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 1991

Hello again.
This is the newsletter that I hoped I would never have to write, but sadly, the increasing problems associated with my health make it impossible for me to continue with the Victorian Bing Crosby Society. If you were present at our last meeting, you would be aware of my limitations of both movement and speech. For the record, I am suffering from a rare illness called Motor Nuerone Disease. Our American members will know this as 'Lou Gherig's Disease'.

It's hard to believe that 14 years have elapsed since our first tentative meeting in August of 1977 but I still remember the enthusiastic response at the time to the proposition that a Bing Crosby Society again be formed in Melbourne. That the group survived and flourished despite Bing's shock death a few weeks later is due to the enduring Crosby magic.

I think the thing that surprised me most at the time was the flow of membership applications, not only from other states in Australia but also from overseas. At the start, I was hesitant to accept such members - not because they weren't welcome, but because I couldn't see what such people would get out of belonging to a society so far from home. After all, ours was a regional group based on social activities - several film screenings a year plus the occasional barbecue and dinner. But since then I have learned of the common bond that Crosby admirers share and the desire to be part of the Crosby world, no matter where in the world this may be.

And so, to give members who were unable to attend our meetings something for their money, our newsletter 'The Crosby Voice' was born. I had intended that this be a modest little publication consisting of half a dozen folded foolscap pages, but somewhere along the line, things began to get a little out of hand and a couple of years back, our 'newsletter' had evolved into a stapled 60 - 70 page A4 quarterly magazine! Eventually, pressure from my own work, plus a knowledge that my illness would one day make continued production impossible, I reluctantly abandoned publication. But it was fun while it lasted!

There have been so many highlights over the past fourteen years that I don't know where to begin. However, they would have to include the screening of virtually all of Bing's movies including one unseen in Australia since the 1940s - 'King of Jazz'. Purchasing a colour print of this film in the late 1970s almost sent our young society broke, but we scraped through. Establishing the club's cassette library which featured all of Bing's commercial discs in chronological order also gave me great satisfaction, as did importing a number of LPs from overseas for members.

The growth of home video in the 1980s meant that we were able to supply tapes of Bing's early movies plus other rare items to interested parties, while this society was responsible for the distribution of the 'lost' soundtrack of Bing's first short film 'Ripstitch the Tailor'.

Right about here, I should make it clear that I am not claiming credit for all of the above. Far from it. There are so many people who should be thanked that I could fill a page with their names alone. Instead, I am taking the easy way out. For all those members and friends of the Society (including some who sadly are no longer with us), who gave of their time, efforts and abilities, I give my un-dying gratitude. Without your help and support, the Victorian Bing Crosby Society would have died with Bing in 1977.

So where to now? We are in the curious position of having a quite healthy bank balance - enough to pay for at least three more meetings without members having to put their hands in their pockets. Moreover, this does not count the money in the club's accounts in the USA and UK! I would suggest that members in those two countries who would like to have a refund are welcome to it with any sums left over being donated to a worthwhile cause. I am sorry to leave things so open-ended at this time. The Executive Committee will be meeting before our December 3rd screening to map out several options put to the members. Don't miss this night - it won't cost you a cent to get in and even the raffle tickets will be free!

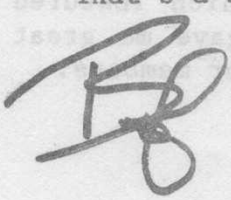
TUESDAY DECEMBER 3RD - FREE MEETING

The main feature of the evening will be the TV Special: BING CROSBY - HIS LIFE AND LEGEND. Narrated by William Holden and made a couple of years after Bing died, this is one of the best programmes ever made on his life. However, because of copyright reasons, the early Paramount movies weren't included. Therefore, as a support piece, I have cut together some of the musical highlights from THE BIG BROADCAST, COLLEGE HUMOUR, TOO MUCH HARMONY, WE'RE NOT DRESSING and GOING HOLLYWOOD.

Please feel free to bring along friends but as the AMP Theatrette only holds 248 people, if we get a full house, we'll have to shut the doors. Starting time is 7.30pm sharp.

Let me end with a couple of quick notes:

* Best wishes to Derek Parkes - we hope that you enjoyed meeting us as much as we enjoyed meeting you in October.
* The Crosby Voice was always happy to feature auction lists for members, and although we really don't have room here, this one is too good to leave out.

JACK SOUTHER, 2011 44th Ave, San Francisco, Ca 94116 USA, has a complete Crosby collection to dispose of. Jack has over 1500 78s, 45s, LPs, V Discs, 10" - 16" non-commercial pressings, four dozen books, 800 photos, 300 sheet music covers, etc etc etc. There are all the rare items you expect plus others you may not, like a Decca acetate "Happy Birthday to Papa Bing Crosby" recorded by Louis Armstrong on May 2nd 1939, as well as a number of private records from Bing's own collection. Write for details.

That's a nice high note to go out on. See you December 3rd.